subject to availability of funds under State Plans, Centrally Sponsored Scheme and externally aided projects. Plantation of species of local importance is encouraged under these programmes. Rosewood and Sandalwood trees are planted in accordance with the local conditions in suitable areas.

Pollution by Mathura Refinery

7943. SHRIMATI KAMLA SINHA: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the oil refinery at Mathura thirty miles away from the Taj Mahal, now sends 1000 kilos of sulphur dioxide into the air every hour;

(b) whether this level of pollution is in breach of India's own environmental safety laws;

(c) whether pollution from the refinery is affecting adversely, not only the Taj Mahal but also the Bharatpur Bird Sanctuary and the ancient temples of Vrindaban and Mathura; and

(d) if so,, what steps, if any Government intend to take to protect the country's heritage from such pollution?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI KAMAL NATH): (a) and (b) The Mathura Refinery emits about 650 kg per hour of sulphur dioxide against the prescribed limit of 1000.

(c) The expert opinion in this regard suggests that there is only a marginal effect of the emissions from the Mathura Refinery on the Taj Mahal and other sensitive spots in the Agra-Mathura region.

(d) Steps taken by the Government to save the country's heritage from pollution include;

(i) A trapezium surrounding the Taj Mahal has been down marcated. No new pollution industry is allowed to be set up in this area.

(ii) There is a ban on the use of furnace oil and diesel generators by the industries in Agra. The foundries are not permitted to operate during winter nights.

(iii) A continuous sulphur dioxide monitoring station has been maintained at the Taj Mahal from January, 1991 to monitor the levels of sulphur dioxide and oxides of nitrogen in the ambient air.

(iv) The Mathura Refinery authorities are continuously monitoring the ambient air quality at Mathura and adjacent areas since the inception of the refinery.

(v) A network of ambient air quality monitoring stations has been set up and operated in Agra by the Uttar Pradesh Pollution Control Board.

(vi) The Forests Department of Government of Uttar Pradesh has created a green belt around the Taj Mahal by planting trees on available government land. The Ministry of Environment and Forests has also initiated a green belt development plan in Agra with the help of the Uttar Pradesh Government. It has been reported that 150000 saplings were planted in 1994 in fallow lands available in the vicinity of Taj Mahal.

(vii) The Archaeological Survey of India is constantly monitoring the ambient air quality including sulphur dioxide, suspended particulate matter and other pollutants as well as meteorological data around Taj Mahal. Besides this maintenance work of Taj Mahal is carried out regularly.

(viii) The Government of India has initiated a ten point package programme in the Agra-Mathura Trapezium to save Taj Mahal from the effects of air pollution. The components of the package programme include the following:

-- LPG to be made available for all households.

- Unleaded-low lead petrol to be made available in the Trapezium

– Preferential allocation of LPG to be made for industries.

Low sulphur diesel for transport to be made available.

- - Intensification of environment management to be made by the Mathura Refinery.

Natural gas to be made available for industries.

Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) to be made available for vehicles.

Extinction of Tibetan Antelopes

7944. SHRIMATI KAMLA SINHA: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Tibetan antelopes are among the highly endangered species;

(b) whether it is a also a fact that illicit trade in antelope wool abounds and thousands of animals have been killed in recent years for their wool; and

(c) if so, what steps, if any, have been taken by Government to protect the Tibetan antelope and prevent its imminent extinction?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI KAMAL NATH): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Some cases of illegal trade in articles made out of wool, obtained from the Tibetan antelope have come to notice. However, the population of the Tibetan antelope which occurs in India only in the north-eastern part of Ladakh is estimated at around 200 animals. There are no reports of this animal being killed in India. This species is found mainly in Tibet.

(c) The Tibetan antelope has been provided complete legal protection against hunting and trade under the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972. The species is also included in Appendix I of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) which prohibits international trade in the Tibetan antelope and its parts and derivatives. Raids are being carried out by the Wildlife authorities whenever information on illegal trade of articles made out of Tibetan antelope wool is received. The Wildlife Authorities, Jammu & Kashmir have been advised to ensure that no killing of the Tibetan antelope takes place and that the animal is provided the fullest protection.

Depletion of Bamboo Forests in Western Ghats

7945. SHRIMATI KAMLA SINHA: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT & FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the depletion and destruction of bamboo forests in the Western Ghats is leading to an overall depletion of biodiversity in the area;

(b) whether various species of butterflies, which indicate environmental change, are now on the verge of extinction. and

(c) if so, what steps Government propose to take to rectify the situation and save he region from irreparable invironmental degradation?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI KAMAL NATH): (a